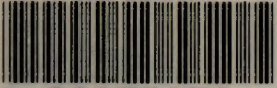


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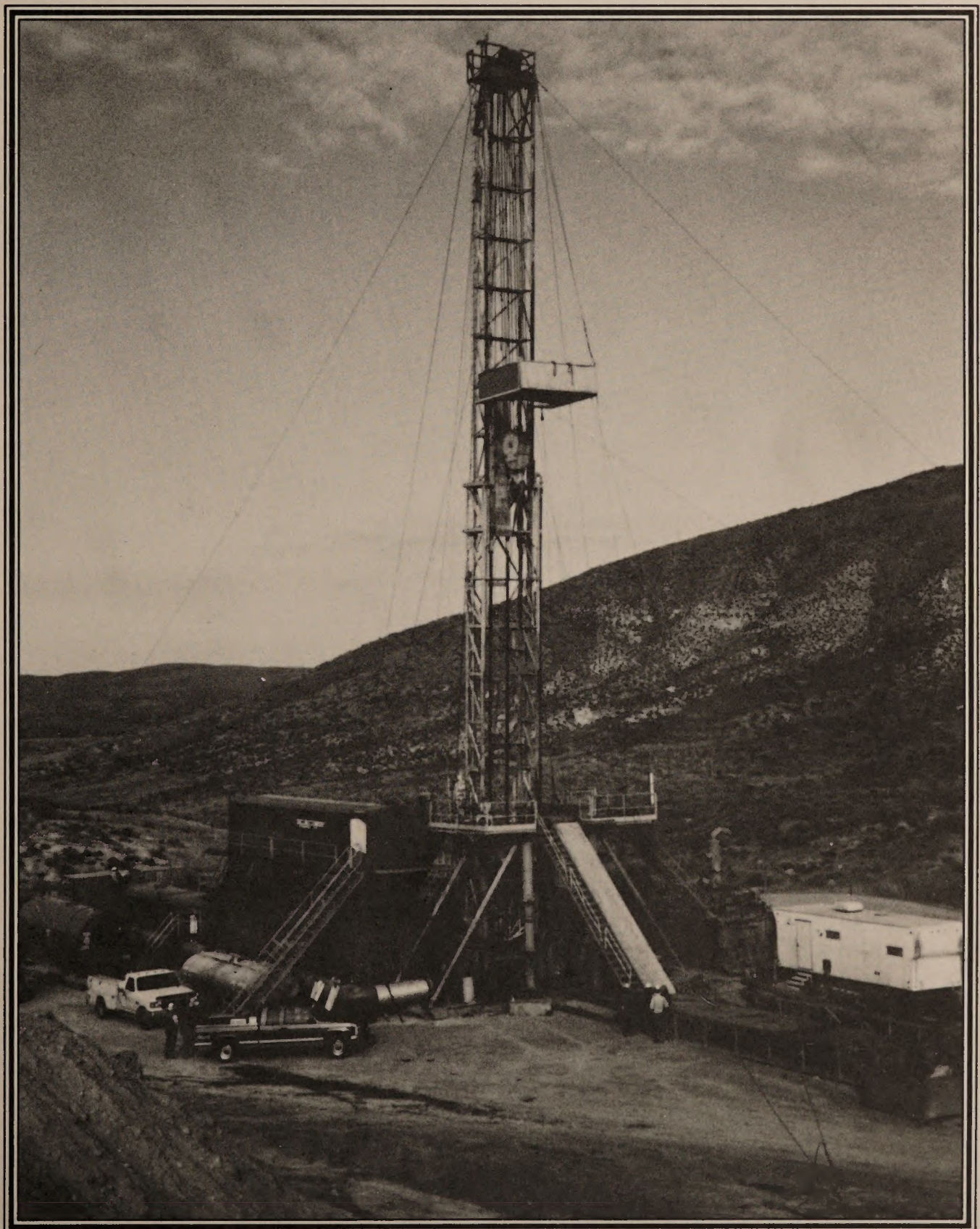
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April 1994



Vale District Planning Update for the Malheur Resource Area



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As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interest of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

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**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

Vale District Office
100 Oregon Street
Vale Oregon 97918

April 1994



Planning Update

Introduction

This planning update is part of an effort by the Vale District of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and three other eastern Oregon BLM districts, for an enhanced public notification and involvement program. The update is designed to help you understand proposals and decisions involving the BLM. Public involvement and input is important in the decision making process of BLM's ongoing land use planning and implementation.

This is the sixth of similar update reports summarizing progress towards implementation of three planning documents in the Vale BLM district: Northern Malheur Management Framework Plan (MFP), Southern Malheur Rangeland Program Summary (1984), and the Ironside RPS (1981). The update lists accomplishments of the Malheur Resource Area during fiscal year 1993 (October 1992 to September 30, 1993) and actions anticipated for the 1994 fiscal year. The summary is not intended to be a comprehensive statement of all activities completed, but rather a brief status report.

What to Expect in This Document

Mailers like this one will be prepared annually. While a flexible format will be maintained for the mailer, major sections similar to those described below will be included in each edition.

Feature Report: Reports in this section highlight topics of concern or high public interest within the Malheur Resource Area and may include major accomplishments completed the previous year or upcoming events. This edition features a report on geothermal exploration within the Vale Known Geothermal Resource Area in the Malheur Resource Area.

Summary of Work: This section identifies, by each major resource program, the accomplishments of the resource area in FY 1993 and also the work to be emphasized in FY 1994. The purpose of this section is to describe the work completed the previous year and list those areas of focus for the upcoming year.

Environmental Assessment Register: The environmen-

tal assessments scheduled for completion in FY 1994, or beyond, are listed in this section. This listing is provided to facilitate public participation in the impact analysis of proposed on-the-ground actions.

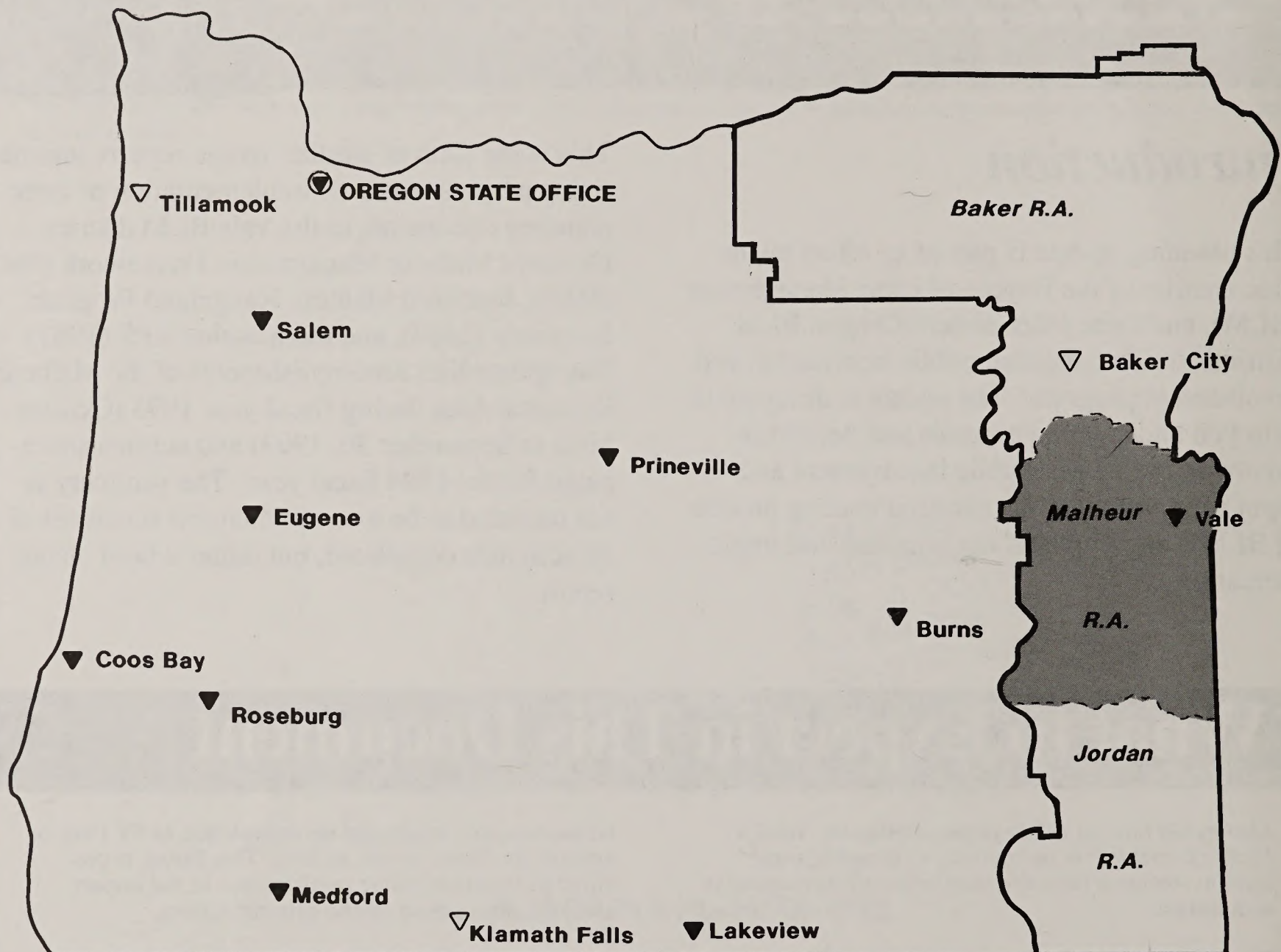
Vale District Mailing List: This section is essential to maintain an accurate mailing list of interested individuals, groups and organizations. The Vale BLM District addresses a complexity of issues in its management which necessitate public notification and involvement in the decision making process. Another purpose of this section is to facilitate you in notifying BLM of those issues/topics which interest you.

This mailer should bring you up-to-date concerning implementation of BLM's land use plans in the Malheur Resource Area. Any comments regarding format or content of the mailer to improve future issues would be appreciated. Suggestions should be sent to the Bureau of Land Management, Malheur Resource Area Manager, 100 Oregon Street, Vale, OR 97918.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management

VALE DISTRICT

GENERAL LOCATION MAP



● BLM State Office

▼ BLM District Office

▽ BLM Area Office

— District Boundary

- - - Resource Area Boundary

Geothermal Resource Area Being Studied

The 22,000-acre Vale Known Geothermal Resource Area (KGRA) is located immediately southeast of Vale. Approximately 14,000 acres of this KGRA are public lands, managed by the BLM, with federally-owned minerals. The area has several hot springs which have a long history of attempted development dating to the Oregon Trail days. The hot water has been used in the past for a public hot springs pool and for heating green houses. Current uses include heat for private residences, a grain drying facility, the Vale city pool, and the Oregon Trail Mushroom Plant. Exploratory drilling in the mid-1970s evaluated the potential for commercial power production at the site, but no power plant development was proposed.

Trans-Pacific Geothermal Corporation (TGC) of Oakland, California was awarded a power purchase agreement by the Bonneville Power Administration in 1992. This agreement awards the right to sell 30-MW of power generated from the Vale geothermal source. The company, in a joint venture with ESI Energy of Florida, is now conducting exploration to determine the potential for development of a geothermal power plant.

Geothermal exploration consists of three generalized steps. The first step involves gathering of existing geologic data and conducting geologic reconnaissance of the area. The second step is drilling of temperature gradient wells. In the final step, deep wells are drilled into the projected geothermal resource area.

Geothermal exploration activity in the Vale KGRA began with TGC's submission of a Plan of Exploration on June 28, 1993. Their plan proposed drilling and testing up to 10 geothermal wells on public land located between 1 and 5 miles southeast of Vale (specifically T. 18S., R. 45E., W.M., Sections 33 and 34; and T. 19S., R. 45E., W.M., Sections 3, 4, 11, 13 and 24).

In the fall of 1993, 17 shallow temperature-gradient wells were also drilled and ground water temperatures were measured to obtain general information about the size and location of the geothermal resource. This information was used to determine where to locate the deeper exploration wells, some possibly as deep as 7,000 feet.

Wells of this depth require using large drill rigs like those used in oil fields and take approximately one month each to drill.

Environmental impacts associated with the deep exploration wells were analyzed in an environmental assessment the summer of 1993. The EA public comment and BLM specialists' input resulted in changes in the Plan of Exploration which reduced impacts on other land uses or resources in compliance with existing Federal Law and BLM policies. The revised Plan of Exploration, subject to these additional conditions, was approved on November 1, 1993.

Drilling of the first exploration well to determine the potential for geothermal development began in late January 1994. Each exploration well-site requires construction of a level, approximately 300-square foot drill pad. Each site will have a holding pond constructed to contain drilling fluids and geothermal waters produced during flow tests of the completed wells. Roads in the area will be upgraded to allow for the passage of highway semi-trailer trucks.

If sufficient geothermal resource is located, hot water of over 300 degrees fahrenheit could be used to generate electricity. It would require several production wells to collect the geothermal water. Any proposed power plant development would require preparation of an environmental impact statement.



Summary of Work

This summary is organized into 11 areas of accomplishment/focus:

Range Management
Hazardous Materials
Fish/Wildlife/Botany
Lands & Rights-of-Way
Minerals
ACEC Management
Cultural Resources
Wilderness
Recreation
Noxious Weed Control
Fire Management
Wild Horse Management



Range Management Program

1993 Accomplishments

This rangeland program summary (RPS) covers that portion of the Malheur Resource Area located in the Ironside and Southern Malheur EIS areas.

The 1993 Rangeland Improvement Program consisted of constructing 3 miles of riparian fence, 5 miles of management fence, 10 springs, and 1 mile of pipeline maintenance.

Vegetation monitoring was completed on 54 allotments, including 21 "I" (Improve), 32 "M" (Maintain) and 1 "C" (Custodial) category allotments. (These three classifications are determined by the allotment's condition or potential for resource conflict.) An active use supervision program resulted in numerous visits to all "I" and "M" allotments, as well as all riparian areas.

The 1993 grazing season, unlike 1992, had adequate water and good vegetative growth. In most areas, however, turnout was delayed to allow for adequate vegetative growth.

Seven allotments were evaluated during 1993 (see findings summary below). Livestock use in relation to carrying capacity was monitored through collection and analysis of actual use, utilization and climate data. Trend studies were used to determine whether land use objectives were being met and whether grazing preference changes and practices were warranted. The evaluation process will continue as scheduled on the remaining "I" and "M" allotments. Allotments in the "I" category are evaluated every 5 years, and the "M" category every 10 years, unless problems dictate otherwise.

Allotment #3. Evaluation for Allotment #3 recommended maintaining current active preference. This recommendation took into consideration two 1992 decisions for reduced spring grazing and no increase in either active preference or exchange of use. Since the decisions have only been in effect for one year, the evaluation could not yet determine whether these rulings have been beneficial to the allotment. The evaluation did, however, recommend that a grazing system be developed before the 1994 grazing season.

Birch Creek. The Birch Creek Allotment showed very little difference between preference and carrying capacity. Early use treatment has been effective for riparian improvement in this pasture. The Fenced Federal Range status is no longer suitable for the Island Field, due to the BLM purchase of the Birch Creek and Morrison properties for enhancement and protection of the Owyhee Wild and Scenic River. The evaluation recommended: (1) retaining the historical use period of November 1 to March 30 for the Island Field, (2) establishing objectives and monitoring studies for upland and riparian vegetation and a sterile milk-vetch site for the Island Field, and (3) retaining historical grazing systems for Birch Creek and Blue Canyon pastures.

Castle Rock. Evaluation of the Castle Rock Allotment showed no change in grazing preference. Some riparian-specific recommendations were made, including implementation of BLM riparian policy on communities adjacent to the North Fork Malheur River, where currently there are no MFP or RPS riparian objectives. Another recommendation for this wild and scenic study river was to establish riparian monitoring plots on the BLM-administered land bordering the river. The river has outstandingly remarkable values for recreation, scenic, and fish and wildlife. Among its special fish values is bull trout, a federal candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Because of the trout's potential for listing, its habitat needs are given close consideration in management activities in the area.

A recommendation was made to consider management control of juniper because its encroachment in the Castle Rock pasture and other pastures is impacting aspen production. The juniper control being proposed is to increase aspen sprouting and establishment.

Another recommendation is to monitor the Allotment Management Plan objectives that were revised to meet BLM riparian policy.



Aside from a road trespass at Castle Rock, there was compliance with the Wilderness Study Area policy (see Wilderness summary section).

McCain Springs. Evaluation of the McCain Springs Allotment showed no change in grazing preference. An allotment change to an "M" category was recommended, pending subsequent evaluation shows the objectives are still being met. Formalization of the grazing system through an Allotment Management Plan or agreement was also recommended.

The McCain Springs Evaluation found that wildlife objectives are being met in the seeding. However, due to repeated wildfires in the allotment area in general, shrub cover is inadequate for species diversity; this finding resulted in the recommendation to not plan or implement any brush controls in the allotment.

Poall Creek. Evaluation showed that active grazing preference in Poall Creek Allotment should either be reduced to an authorized active level in balance with the calculated available forage production, or have management action implemented to make use of available forage currently used only lightly.

There were several other recommendations, as follows:

- * Implement the BLM riparian-wetland initiative in Poall Creek Allotment for the recovery of riparian communities adjacent to Poall Creek and Blacks Creek.
- * Remove riparian research enclosures on private land. However, on public land, maintain riparian enclosures as demonstration plots with modifications to facilitate livestock trailing through those enclosures on existing trails on Poall Creek. The remaining enclosures will be managed to exclude livestock grazing.
- * Revise the Poall Creek Allotment Management Plan to ensure the grazing schedule addresses multiple-use management of upland and riparian plant communities.
- * Remove the 500-acre brush control in Poall Creek Allotment from the project planning system due to negative impacts the burn would have on wildlife habitat, primarily western sage grouse.

Tunnel Canyon. Evaluation of Tunnel Canyon Allotment showed that grazing preference is within capacity. It was recommended that if winter use is continued, spring use should end by May 15. However, if season-long use is made, deferment during the critical grazing season should be two out of three years. It was further recommended to reevaluate wildlife objectives and establish upland objectives. Another recommendation was to change the allotment to an "M" category and formalize a grazing system.

West Bench. Allotment evaluation of West Bench established new active preference at 152 AUMs, with 41 AUMs in voluntary non-use. A recommendation was made to change key species to bottlebrush squirreltail and giant wild rye, and to change pasture deferments until after June 15th in alternate years because a June 1st date does not meet growth requirements of bottlebrush squirreltail. The evaluation found wildlife browse needs being met.

The overall range trend from our evaluations through the years is as follows:

<u>Trend</u> <u>Unknown</u>	<u>Trend</u> <u>Down</u>	<u>Trend</u> <u>Static to Down</u>	<u>Trend not</u> <u>Apparent</u>	<u>Trend</u> <u>Static to Up</u>	<u>Trend</u> <u>Up</u>
243,092	129,706	118,664	891,875	286,161	263,997

1994 Plans

The 54 allotments will continue to be monitored with study emphasis on actual use, utilization and trend. In riparian areas, monitoring studies and use supervision will have high priority; there will be special emphasis on ensuring that grazing schedules are followed to allow improvement of riparian areas.

Nine allotment evaluations are proposed for early 1994:

<i>Allotment #2 (0201)</i>	<i>North Harper (0402)</i>
<i>Jonesboro (0306)</i>	<i>Spring Mountain (10504)</i>



Nyssa (0403)

Richie Flat (0214)

Keeney Creek (0401)

Mahogany Mountain (10509)

McEwen (0603)

Hazardous Materials Program

1993 Accomplishments

Cleaning efforts were completed and monitoring continued on the 1,900-gallon fuel oil release that occurred in 1990 when an underground storage tank at the Vale BLM District warehouse contaminated the underground aquifer. Further information about this clean-up is available at the Vale District Office.

In accordance with EPA guidelines, wells downgradient from Vale City Dump site were sampled. No contamination was discovered.

To comply with the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), the resource area submitted reports to the State of Oregon Fire Marshall Office on materials being stored at the Vale, Juntura and Birch Creek administrative sites.

With help from the Army Corps of Engineers, the resource area surveyed the old bombing range near West Bench, but discovered nothing of significance.

1994 Plans

The resource area expects more coordination efforts with the DEQ on mining activities in the Malheur Resource Area. Other future plans are to continue responding to illegal or "Midnight Dumps" and any hazardous material incidents that occur. In coordination with other programs, the Vale BLM District is developing methodologies and inventory plans for identifying potential hazardous materials sites/situations.

Level I surveys will be conducted on several realty actions initiated in the resource area.

Reports will be completed on administrative sites where necessary.

Fish/Wildlife/ Botany Program

1993 Accomplishments

Key wildlife habitats were monitored in the nine grazing allotments scheduled for evaluations during the winter



of 1993-1994 (for list of allotments, see 1994 Plans for Range Management Program). While evaluation of riparian pastures continued to be a priority, shrub cover in seedings was also evaluated to determine potential wildlife habitat needs.

Budget constraints prevented assessment of riparian habitat by low-level color infrared and true color aerial photography in 1993. Riparian monitoring was conducted with photo plots. Further riparian surveys were conducted to determine whether riparian habitat was present in previously unsurveyed areas near Stockade Mountain. Another accomplishment was establishment of a riparian vegetation transect in Brogan Canyon.

Special status species monitoring continued on 40,000 acres of western sage grouse habitat. Eight new strutting grounds were identified. In addition, a cooperative effort was started with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to monitor leks in Malheur County. As part of that effort, BLM wildlife staff monitored five leks in Malheur Resource Area. Also, four sage grouse brood routes were surveyed for reproductive data.

Other inventories and monitoring were done specific to special status species, including raptors and neotropical migratory birds along the Owyhee River, woodpeckers at Ironside Mountain, long-billed curlews, and burrowing owls.

Several volunteer efforts were initiated for wildlife and wildlife habitat. A shrub planting project in the Tub Mountain area resulted from coordination with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Ontario schools. Also in coordination with ODFW and BLM, a volunteer monitored burrowing owls throughout the nesting season. A long-term volunteer effort was initiated with the Nyssa School District's SMILE club (Science and Math Investigative Learning Experience) for students to do riparian projects along the Lower Owyhee River.



Wildlife staff supported several interdisciplinary team efforts over the year, including development of the Leslie Gulch ACEC Plan, the Trans-Pacific Geothermal Environmental Assessment, the Owyhee River Management Plan, and the Allotment Management Plan. Initial scoping was completed for the South Alkali Management Area coordinated activity plan.

A pamphlet is now available that describes smooth blazing star (*Mentzelia mollis*), a federal Category 2 plant growing in the Succor Creek vicinity in an area exclosed for its protection. (Category 2 species need additional information to propose as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.)

Implementation on three Conservation Agreements began with the writing of the Leslie Gulch ACEC plan, limitation of off-highway vehicle use in certain areas to existing roads and trails, sponsorship of grimy ivesia (*Ivesia rhypara* var. *rhypara*) with the Center for Plant Conservation for perpetual seed curation, and staking of exclosure sites for Harper Valley fiddleneck (*Amsinckia carinata*).

Monitoring continued as part of implementation for Malheur forget-me-not (*Hackelia cronquistii*) Habitat Management Plan (HMP). Four new sites of this species were located, including a significant range extension near Adrian, Oregon. Monitoring also continued for Mulford's milk-vetch (*Astragalus mulfordiae*).

Field surveys were conducted prior to work implementation on 15 projects, and 13 other projects were reviewed prior to construction activities. Two sensitive plant species populations w of Malheur forget-me-not and Snake River golden weed (*Haplopappus radiatus*) were found as a result of these inventories.

Eight summer field tours were made in conjunction with the range evaluation program. During these tours, there were two noxious weed sitings (Russian knapweed and rush skeletonweed) and two federal candidate plant sitings (smooth blazing star and Owyhee clover).

1994 Plans

Completion of the Leslie Gulch ACEC Plan and the South Alkali Management Plan will continue to be high priority for the 1994 wildlife and botany programs.

Inventory will be conducted for Owyhee clover. Additional monitoring will be implemented for special status species, such as Mulford's milk-vetch, sage grouse, burrowing owls and woodpeckers. Inventory and monitoring of raptors and neotropical migratory birds will continue, especially along the Owyhee River. The habitat management plan (HMP) for Malheur forget-me-not will continue to be monitored. Fence construction for the Harper Valley fiddleneck exclosures is planned.

Further volunteer coordination for wildlife and riparian projects is expected. The Nyssa School SMILE club, Adrian High School and the Ontario Bird Club will all be involved in projects in 1994.

Lands and Rights-of-Way Program

1993 Accomplishments

During the year, the following rights-of-way were issued:

- * Idaho Power - Resolve trespass.
- * Warm Springs Irrigation District - Bridge and roadway at Warm Springs Reservoir.
- * Vale Oregon Irrigation District - Bridge and roadway at Warm Springs Reservoir.
- * Bureau of Reclamation - Reservation for access road and bridge and roadway at Warm Springs Reservoir.
- * Private individual - Water pipeline

Four Road Use Agreements were issued to Castle Rock Ranch and Alpine Timber Corporation.

Four Land Use Permits were issued, three for agricultural purposes and one for a storage site.

The resource area resolved four cases of unauthorized use by issuing rights-of-way, collecting trespass fees, or resolving trespass.

The lands program is continuing with the review of lands withdrawn for the Bureau of Reclamation, as mandated by Section 204(L) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. Seven withdrawal review reports

containing BLM recommendations for the disposition of lands within the Bureau of Reclamation withdrawals have been completed and submitted to the Oregon BLM State Office.

A Hazardous Material Inventory was completed on all potential hazardous rights-of-way within Malheur Resource Area. All rights-of-way were determined to be low potential.

The resource area completed an RS-2477 inventory at the request of the Oregon BLM State Office, for use in the Department of the Interior Report to Congress on RS-2477 issues entitled "The History and Management of RS-2477 Rights-of-Way Claims on Federal and Other Lands." Revised Statute 2477 addressed rights-of-way for the construction of highways over public lands, not reserved for public use. This act was repealed by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of October 21, 1976.

A patent was issued to a 40-acre parcel of land near Juntura under the Class I Color of Title Act of December 22, 1928. This act states that if the claimant or the claimants predecessors can prove, through legal documentation, that they have held the land in good faith for a minimum of 20 years and can show that during that period of time they have made valuable improvements to the land or that part of the land has been used for cultivation, then they are eligible to receive this title.

1994 Plans

The 1994 workload for the Lands and Rights-of-Way Program includes completion of withdrawal review, right-of-way processing for utility lines, processing of short-term agricultural permits and renewal authorizations, resolution of agricultural trespass and other trespass cases, and completion of the Dry Peak (Cottonwood Mountain) Communication Site Management Plan.

A land exchange with Oregon Trail Farms continues to be a priority for completion.

An amendment to the Northern Malheur Management Framework Plan is scheduled for completion in FY-94. The amendment will identify specific parcels that may be disposed of through sale to resolve agricultural trespass.

Minerals Program

1993 Accomplishments

There were 10 Free Use Permits issued for gravel to satisfy county and road district needs, and 13 gravel sales issued to the public.

Two community pits were closed, one due to non-use and the other due to occurrence of a rare plant (smooth blazing star) growing at the site.

All community pits, except one within Malheur Resource Area, have been posted with signs. Twenty field inspections were conducted on community pits during FY-93.

The update's feature article on Vale's Known Geothermal Area lists mineral-related activities specific to that resource.

As expected, the level of exploration activity for gold and other locatable minerals remained quite low for the year. Of the total of 40 notices processed, only three were for projects where exploratory drilling or trenching

resulted in surface disturbance. 25 notices were submitted to meet BLM requirements for small miner exemptions from new claim rental fees. A few operators continue to extract geodes, picture jasper, bentonite and zeolite.

There were 21 compliance examinations completed which resulted in no new notices of noncompliance (NONs). Three NONs from previous years had been corrected by the operators and were rescinded. Five NONs remain in effect.

Reclamation was completed on two long term gold exploration projects. The Jesse Page project at Quartz Mountain was completed by Morrison Knudsen. Reshaping of 33,000 feet of exploration roads and 120 drill pads was completed in the fall of 1992. High amounts of winter/spring moisture resulted in excellent establishment of reclamation species at the site. The Lavery project in the Dry Creek Buttes WSA was also completed. Sagebrush seedlings, which were planted in 1991 and subsequently irrigated for two growing seasons, had sufficient survivability for bond release during 1993.

The Grassy Mountain gold mine EIS remains on hold. Newmont Gold Company is yet to submit their revised Plan of Operations. The state permitting process will require two to three years for completion and the federal and state permitting processes will be completed concurrently when the state process is at the appropriate stage. The mine plan of operations will be evaluated to determine if there is a need to repeat any of the EIS process.

1994 Plans

The Minerals Material Program will continue focusing on achieving clearances for all designated community pits. Free Use Permits and gravel sales will be issued as requested, and inspections of gravel pits will continue.

Coordination will continue with Trans-Pacific regarding their exploration in the Vale Known Geothermal Resource Area (see feature article).

Mineral exploration activity is expected to remain at relatively low levels during 1994. Exploration projects which remain active will continue to be monitored and reclamation will initiated when appropriate.

The five projects remaining in noncompliance will receive priority attention as administrative solutions are pursued.

ACEC Management

1993 Accomplishments

Development of the Leslie Gulch ACEC management plan proceeded through the public scoping, analysis of alternatives and environmental assessment stages during 1993. Public involvement has included contact with user and special interest groups and two public mailings soliciting comments. Managing recreational uses and conflicts with special status plants in the ACEC continue to attract the most public attention during development of the plan.

1994 Plans

Public comment received on the environmental assessment will be analyzed and a draft management plan will be developed for public comment in March of 1994. The final plan is scheduled for release in June of 1994.

Cultural Resources Program

1993 Accomplishments

Cultural resource surveys were conducted on approximately 1,100 acres of public lands administered by the Malheur Resource Area, and cultural reports were submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office for 78 proposed projects. The surveys located 13 prehistoric sites, 2 of which are large source areas for basalt and obsidian. None of the cultural resources identified will be detrimentally impacted by any of the BLM's proposed management activities.

In cooperation with the Recreation program, new interpretive panels were installed, six at Keeney Pass Interpretive Site, and one each at Alkali Springs and the Birch Creek Wagon Ruts sites.

The Oregon Trail sesquicentennial (150th) anniversary was celebrated with the reenactment of travel by wagon train along the trail. Two wagon trains participated in this reenactment. One wagon train traveled from the Wyoming/Idaho border to Oregon City; the other wagon train traveled the entire route from Independence, Missouri to Independence, Oregon. The wagon trains averaged 15-20 miles per day. At communities where the wagon trains stopped to rest, travelers were provided with entertainment and presentations on local history.

After being exposed by county road grading activities, a fire hearth adjacent to the Oregon Trail was excavated as a data recovery project. A charcoal sample was collected and submitted for radiocarbon dating to determine if the hearth reflects prehistoric use or was contemporaneous with the Oregon Trail. Dates from the sample indicate two periods of use: AD 1706-1720 and AD 1820 -1920.

1994 Plans

A determination of eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places will be completed for an archaeological site located in Leslie Gulch. Additional surveys will be conducted in canyons adjacent to Leslie Gulch to supplement existing data on prehistoric and historic activities in the area around Owyhee River.

In addition, approximately 1,000 acres will be surveyed for cultural resources in support of the Malheur Resource Area Management Plan.

Wilderness Program

1993 Accomplishments

The Oregon BLM wilderness recommendation presented to Congress the summer of 1992 is still awaiting Congressional action. No projections about a timeframe for a decision can be made because Congress has no set timeframe to take action on BLM wilderness issues.



Fact sheets with reference maps were developed for the 15 Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in the Malheur Resource Area to serve as a quick reference for their specific location, access, description of their resource values, and any associated issues. The fact sheets are available for public and BLM uses.

Interim management of the resource area's 15 designated WSAs included conducting surveillance and compliance field checks throughout the field season. The most intensive WSA sign maintenance effort in several years was accomplished. Visitor surveys were conducted during the use season in the increasingly popular Leslie Gulch area as an effort to better establish what types and levels of use three WSAs are receiving. A fall hunter patrol program was conducted in certain WSAs; however, due to extensive game mortality during the severe 1992-93 winter and limited license issuance by the State of Oregon, hunter use in WSAs was substantially lighter during the fall of 1993 than in previous years.

In the Blue Canyon WSA, two grandfathered mining operations for picture jasper continued. Action to mitigate an unauthorized blading of about 300 feet of an existing vehicular way in Beaver Dam Creek WSA was initiated. Compliance on reclamation of a way bladed without authorization in 1992 in Castle Rock WSA showed progress of vegetation restoration.

One unauthorized surface-disturbing activity occurred in the Honeycombs WSA during the year when motorized vehicles drove beyond the end of a vehicular way on a ridge line in the WSA. "No Vehicle" signs were installed. Any additional reclamation needed will be conducted after a compliance check in 1994.

Compliance was met for two completed projects approved in 1992: a temporary surface water pipeline on an existing vehicular way in Cedar Mountain WSA for watering livestock, and the cleaning of an existing dry earthen reservoir in Dry Creek WSA. Additionally, an abandoned fence was removed from Upper Leslie Gulch WSA.

1994 Plans

Interim management, including field surveillance and compliance monitoring, will continue in the 15 WSAs within the Malheur Resource Area. Any projects proposed within the WSAs would be evaluated to determine consistency with the BLM's Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review (IMP). Ongoing efforts will continue on the unauthorized bladed vehicular way in Beaver Dam Creek WSA to meet reclamation requirements. There will be a concerted effort to remove abandoned unnatural intrusions within WSAs.

Hunter patrols will be conducted if adequate funding is available.

Recreation Program

1993 Accomplishments

For a second year, much attention was directed to preparing for and participating in the national sesquicentennial celebration of the Oregon National Historic Trail. Two new interpretive sites were developed along the trail, one at Alkali Springs and the other at Birch Creek Wagon Ruts. Eight new interpretive panels and an on-site interpretive brochure box were installed at the Keeney Pass site. Partnerships with the State of Oregon and Malheur County provided signing of the Oregon Trail route of several county and state roads in the area, and of Interstate 84, to direct the interested public along the historic route. Numerous interpretive field trips and presentations were conducted with local schools, special interest groups, and civic organizations.



Developments of the new Lower Owyhee River Watchable Wildlife Area were well received and enjoyed by visitors this year. The 13-mile river corridor provides ideal viewing of waterfowl, raptors, songbirds, reptiles and various game and nongame mammal species. The area's interpretive site offers barrier-free access to picnic tables, a restroom, a viewing walkway and interpretive panel, and a brochure distribution box. Volunteers assisted with site maintenance and placement of wildlife habitat improvements.

Two draft planning documents for the Leslie Gulch Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) were distributed for public comment during the year. High resource values of this ACEC include geologic scenery, rare and endemic plant species, and the area's resident herd of bighorn sheep. The recreating public's role is important when determining appropriate management of this highly valued special management area.

The Final North Fork Malheur River Eligibility Study was completed for public distribution. A 14-mile segment between Beulah Reservoir and the Malheur National Forest was specifically mandated by Congress to be studied to determine its eligibility and suitability for possible inclusion as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The purpose of this first study phase, in accordance with the national Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, is to establish what, if any, outstandingly remarkable values, are associated with the river, and to determine whether or not the study river is free flowing. The next study phase, suitability, will be accomplished between 1995 and 1996 with development of a resource management plan (RMP) for the resource area.

Maintenance was conducted along the Leslie Gulch-Succor Creek National Back Country Byway and at eight developed recreation sites—Chukar Park; Twin Springs; Leslie Gulch; Snively Hot Springs; Owyhee Watchable Wildlife site; and Keeney Pass, Alkali Springs and Birch Creek of the Oregon Trail. A successful volunteer campground host program was implemented at Chukar Park. Temporary restroom facilities were again provided at the popular, yet undeveloped Oasis site on Brownlee Reservoir.

1994 Plans

Facilities and grounds maintenance will be conducted at the recreation and interpretive sites and along the Leslie Gulch-Succor Creek National Back Country Byway. The volunteer campground host program will continue at Chukar Park. In partnership with Malheur County, an interpretive panel will be fabricated and installed at the new Trenkel Hill interpretive site on U.S. Highway 20/26 east of Vale to explain the agricultural use in the valley.

A final management plan for the Leslie Gulch Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) will be developed by an interdisciplinary team.

An inventory of free-flowing water courses will be conducted, with a determination of eligibility (based on resource values), for their consideration as possible components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. As with the North Fork Malheur River, the suitability study phase for any eligible water course segments will be conducted during development of the RMP. A similar inventory will be conducted for identifying significant cave resource values. A review and update of the visual resource management inventory will also be accomplished.

Noxious Weed Control Program

1993 Accomplishments

During the 1993 fiscal year, area personnel launched an aggressive plan of monitoring known sites. They surveyed the resource area for new sites and employed manual, mechanical and chemical methods of weed control on numerous sites, new and established.

The following new sitings of "T"-listed (targeted) noxious weeds were reported in Malheur Resource Area:

- 27 Russian knapweed
- 1 Rush skeletonweed
- 2 Diffuse knapweed
- 1 Dalmation toadflax

Area personnel developed, and received clearance through the Oregon BLM State Office for, 11 Pesticide Use Proposals (PUP) required for chemical control of weed infestations on public lands.

To control seed spread, area personnel and district fire crews hand pulled, bagged and burned over 100 leafy spurge sites along approximately 5 miles of riparian area near Brogan.

Area personnel pulled, bagged and burned plants from two isolated sites of yellow starthistle near Succor Creek State Park, then followed up with herbicide treatment on regrowth in an attempt for eradication. District fire crew members used the same manual treatment on one site of Mediterranean sage on the Riverside Road near Juntura in an ongoing attempt for eradication of that site. The first known site of rush skeletonweed was also dug out, bagged and burned.

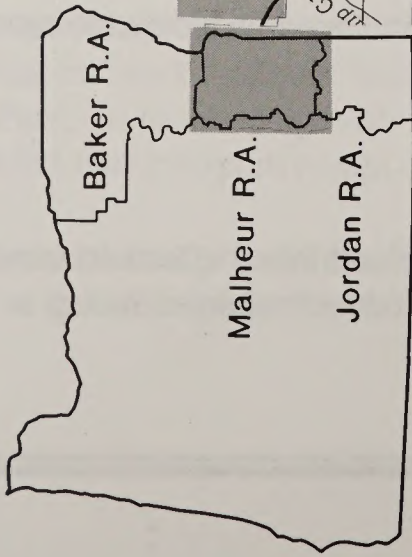
Hand chinking was used for weed control on one large infestation of Scotch thistle in the Leslie Gulch ACEC, which was intermingled with five threatened/endangered species.

The halogeton-control seeding started in 1992 was completed, using rangeland drills, in an attempt to contain and control its spread onto more public and private lands.

An EA was developed for an experimental leafy spurge project, and a student volunteer was located to monitor the site in conjunction with a 3-year high school science project.

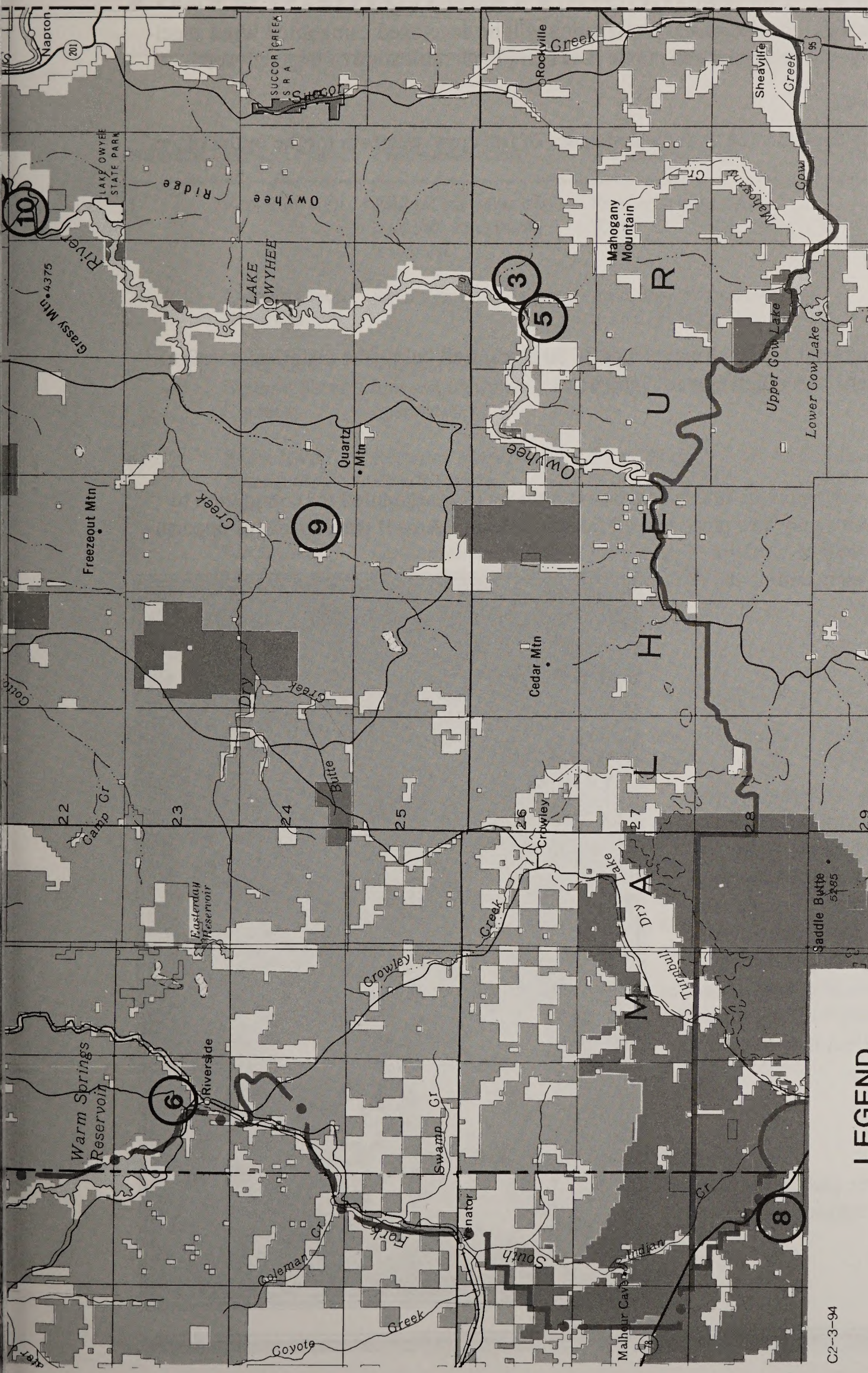
1994 Plans

The weed control program in FY 94 will be an extension of FY 93. There will be continued efforts to monitor known sites, apply control/contain methods where a need is indicated, search for new sites, and develop a Pesticide Use Permit for each site where needed.



VALE DISTRICT





C2-3-94

LEGEND

- District Boundary
- Planning Area Boundary
- BLM Land
- USFS Land
- State Land
- Private Land
- 4 New Proposed 1994 Project

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 Bureau of Land Management
VALE DISTRICT
Malheur Resource Area
 1994

An area map will be developed to show locations of "T"-listed weed sites for quick reference as a tool for tracking expansion trends and to aid in predicting vulnerable new invasion areas.

In cooperation with the District Botanist, an educational presentation will be developed using dried weed specimens and visual aids to assist field-going personnel and public land users in identification of targeted weed species.

The leafy spurge experiment will be implemented with the assistance of fire crew members for the initial placement of plots.

Fire Management

1993 Accomplishments

The 1993 fire season for the area involved 11 fires for a total of 2,780 acres, well below the historical average. The largest fire was the Three Fingers Fire which burned 2,560 acres.

1994 Plans

Currently, the fire organization is working on the Fire Management Activity Plan scheduled for completion by March. Two proposed controlled burns may take place in the Malheur Resource Area if the window of opportunity is available. The resource area will be working closely with the cooperative agencies, including the Ironside Fire Protective Association.

Wild Horse Program

1993 Accomplishments

During 1993, wild horse populations were inventoried at all three Wild Horse Management Areas (HMAs) in the Malheur Resource Area—Cold Springs, Three Fingers and Hog Creek. The latter two HMAs were within management levels. Cold Springs horse population was 30, which is below management levels. Winter weather-related factors from a heavy, long-standing snowfall were attributed to the deaths of at least 15 horses in the Cold Springs HMA. Other horses not accounted for in the Cold Springs HMA may have died from the winter weather also.

1994 Plans

While there are no programmed horse gatherings for 1994, herd management areas will continue to be inventoried and monitored.



Environmental Assessment Register

Number	Project Name	Proposed Action	Project Location	Affected Special Area	Est. EA Complete Date	Est. FONSI Decision Date
1.	Red Rim Well Pit	Add pit for watering purposes to existing windmill	Freezeout allotment T.21S., R.33E. Sec. 10		Spring 94	Spring 94
2.	Canyon Creek Reservoir	Reservoir construction	Jonesburo Allotment T.21S., R.39E., Sec. 33		Spring 94	Spring 94
3.	Leslie Gulch Bighorn Sheep Capture	Bighorn Sheep capture and transplant operations	Leslie Gulch T.26S., R.44E., Sec. 10	ACEC, WSA	Winter 93	Winter 93
4.	South Alkali Management Plan	Resource Management Plan for South Alkali Area	South Alkali T.16,17S., R.45E.	Oregon Trail	Fall 94	Fall 94
5.	Birch Creek Interpretive Site Fence and Cattleguards	Construction of Fence and Cattleguards at the Birch Creek Interpretive Site	Birch Creek T.15S., R.45E.	Oregon Trail	Summer 94	Summer 94
6.	Riverside Recreation Site	Campground and Trailhead Development	Riverside T.23S., R.39E., Sec. 27		Summer 94	Summer 94
7.	Snively Hot Springs	Campground Development	Lower Owyhee Canyon T.21S., R.46E., Sec. 22	Watchable Wildlife	Summer 94	Summer 94
8.	Desert Trail	Route determination of Desert Trail	Between U.S. highway 78 and Malheur National Forest		Summer 94	Summer 94
9.	Page Place Road Realignment	Realignment of county road	Page Place T.24S., R.42E.		Summer 94	Summer 94
10.	Nyssa Road District Stockpile	Gravel Stockpile	Lower Owyhee Canyon T.21S., R.45E.	Watchable Wildlife	Spring 94	Spring 94
11.	E. Cottonwood seeding prescribed burn	Controlled burn	East Cottonwood Seeding T.19S., R.41E.		Summer 94	Summer 94
12.	South NG seed-ing prescribed burn	Controlled burn	South NG seeding T.18S., R.41E.		Summer 94	Summer 94
13.	South Alkali Greenstrip	Rangeland Seeding	South Alkali T.17S., R.45E.		Spring 94	spring 94

Environmental Assessment Registry

BLM Library
Denver Federal Center
Bldg. 50, OC-521
P.O. Box 25047
Denver, CO 80225

VALE DISTRICT MAILING LIST

Government Printing Office regulations require BLM to periodically verify the accuracy and need for mailing lists. This process reduces mailing address errors and keeps on the list only those individuals and groups actively interested in the Vale BLM District's resource programs and issues.

Address Verification

To verify the accuracy of our mailing list, please print your name and address (legibly) including zip code in the space provided below.

Resource Programs/Issues

The following information categories currently exist on the District's mailing list. Please circle those resource programs/issues for which you would like to receive information. **Your name will be removed from our mailing list if this form is not returned by October 31, 1994.** Should you receive other "Yearly Update" documents from the Vale District, only one mailing list insert needs to be returned.

Cultural - Native American Coordination

Cultural - Oregon Trail

Cultural - General

Environ. Analysis - EA Register (refer to EA Register section of this document.)

Fire - General

Fire - Fire Suppression

Forestry - General

Forestry - Timber Sales

Minerals - WSA Plans of Operation

Minerals - Other Plans of Operation

Minerals - Grassy Mtn. Project*

Noxious Weeds - General

Planning - Resource Management Plans

Planning - Baker Yearly RMP Updates

Planning - Jordan Yearly MFP Updates

Planning - Malheur Yearly MFP Updates

Procurement - Contracting

Procurement - Small Lot Sales

Range Management - General

Recreation - General

Recreation - Off Road Vehicles

Recreation - Scenic Byways

Special Mgmt. Areas - Research Natural Areas, Areas of Environmental Concern, Outstanding Natural Areas

Water Quality - General

Wilderness - General

Wild Horses - General

Wildlife - General

Wild/Scenic River - N. Fork Malheur River

Wild/Scenic River - Grand Ronde River

Wild/Scenic River - Owyhee River

Wild/Scenic River - Powder River

Wild/Scenic River - Wallowa Study River

* If you have previously indicated a desire to receive information on the Grassy Mountain project, your name will remain on that mailing list (even if not circled on this form).

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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**
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100 OREGON STREET
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